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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL IS KWBG

SUBJECT: PA REBUILDING FOREIGN MINISTRY; MFA PUSHES FOR SUPPORT TO ABBAS AND PROGRESS ON POLITICAL TRACK

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Foreign Ministry Director General for Bilateral and Multilateral Affairs, Ambassador Ibrahim Krayshah told PolOff August 13 that PM Fayyad may appoint a new Foreign Minister, but has not selected a candidate. He said the PA Foreign Minister and PLO Political Bureau Chief posts should be unified to avoid split diplomatic representation and confusing messages. Krayshah said former MFA Mahmud al-Zahar's (Hamas) tenure destroyed most of the Ministry's organization, drove away qualified personnel and reversed Ministry control of PLO foreign missions and diplomatic appointments. Repeated Palestinian political disappointments have resulted in general skepticism about new peace initiatives, Krayshah said, but also raised expectations of the Fayyad government. He said some Palestinians view an international meeting in the fall as a major opportunity, but many others are pessimistic about what it will deliver. Bio note on new PLO Deputy Representative to UN-Geneva at para 7. End summary.

Fayyad Retain Foreign Affairs Portfolio,
But Considering Several Appointments

¶2. (C) Foreign Ministry Director General for Bilateral and Multilateral Affairs, Ambassador Ibrahim Krayshah (accompanied by MFA diplomat and former member of the Technical Team for Reform (TTR) Imad al-Zuhayri) told PolOff that PM Fayyad may appoint a new Foreign Minister, but has not selected a candidate. Krayshah said Fayyad is too busy running the PA and its finances to manage the MFA's daily operations. Former MFA Ziad Abu Amr was an early possibility for Minister, but is no longer being considered, he said. Until a new minister is named, he said PM Fayyad appointed him as director for PA bilateral and multilateral matters and the PM will appoint other senior diplomats to manage the consular, refugee and economic affairs directorates. He said the posts of PA Foreign Minister and PLO Political Bureau Chief need to be unified to avoid split diplomatic representation and confusing messages.

¶3. (C) Krayshah said former MFA Mahmud al-Zahar's (Hamas) tenure destroyed most of the Ministry's organization, drove away its qualified personnel and reduced PA control of PLO foreign missions and diplomatic appointments. He said the MFA's immediate priorities are to lobby the international community, especially the Arab states, for political and economic support for President Abbas and PM Fayyad, reorganize the Ministry, and bring back into the diplomatic service the talented Palestinians who left during Hamas' control of the Cabinet.

International Meeting "Major

Opportunity, But Also Big Risk"

¶4. (C) Repeated Palestinian political disappointments have resulted in general skepticism about new peace initiatives, Krayshah said, but also raised expectations for the current government as the last chance for peace. He said militarization of the Second Intifadah was a strategic error.

He described the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the frontline in a larger conflict between Arab moderates who favor peace and strong connections with the West, religious extremists who advocate armed struggle and exploit Palestinian disillusionment with the peace process.

¶5. (C) Krayshah said plans for an international meeting in the fall produced sharply divided responses, with some Palestinians viewing it as a major opportunity but many pessimistic about what the meeting will deliver. He said canceling the meeting will be better than holding a meeting that does not yield tangible results. He added that Palestinians will be disappointed unless the meeting produces serious political progress. He said Hamas' media campaign is in high-gear, dismissing the meeting as a meaningless U.S.-Israeli ploy, and Hamas will say "I told you so," if the meeting produces only minor or illusory gains.

Fatah Unable to Reform Itself

¶6. (C) Despite electoral and military defeats, Fatah is divided and dysfunctional, Krayshah said, and probably unable to reform itself. He said a Fatah General Conference is unlikely to happen and would not fix the movement's core problems. He advocated appointing new, younger Fatah Central

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Committee (FCC) and Revolutionary Council (FRC) members to fill current vacancies and to "give new blood to this dying creature." He added that Fatah lacks a defined political program and does not have the confidence of most Palestinians. He said the GoI gave FCC members living abroad permission to return to the West Bank, including FCC member Muhammad Ghnaym (Abu Maher), but that Faruq al-Qaddumi will remain abroad "causing problems."

Bio Note

¶7. (C) Imad al-Zuhayri noted that he will be the new Deputy for the PLO's Permanent Observer Mission to the UN in Geneva as of mid-September. Al-Zuhayri was born in Tulkarm October 21, 1970, received a BA in International Relations in Grenoble, France in 1993, and has worked in the PA Foreign Ministry since December 1994. He was staff assistant for Nabil Sha'ath, desk officer for European Affairs and head of the Ministry Press Office under FM Nasser al-Qidwa. He worked on security reform with ConGen and USSC staff from January-June 2007, under the auspices of then-NSA Muhammad Dahlan. He speaks fluent Arabic, French and English and is proficient in Hebrew. He is married.

WALLES